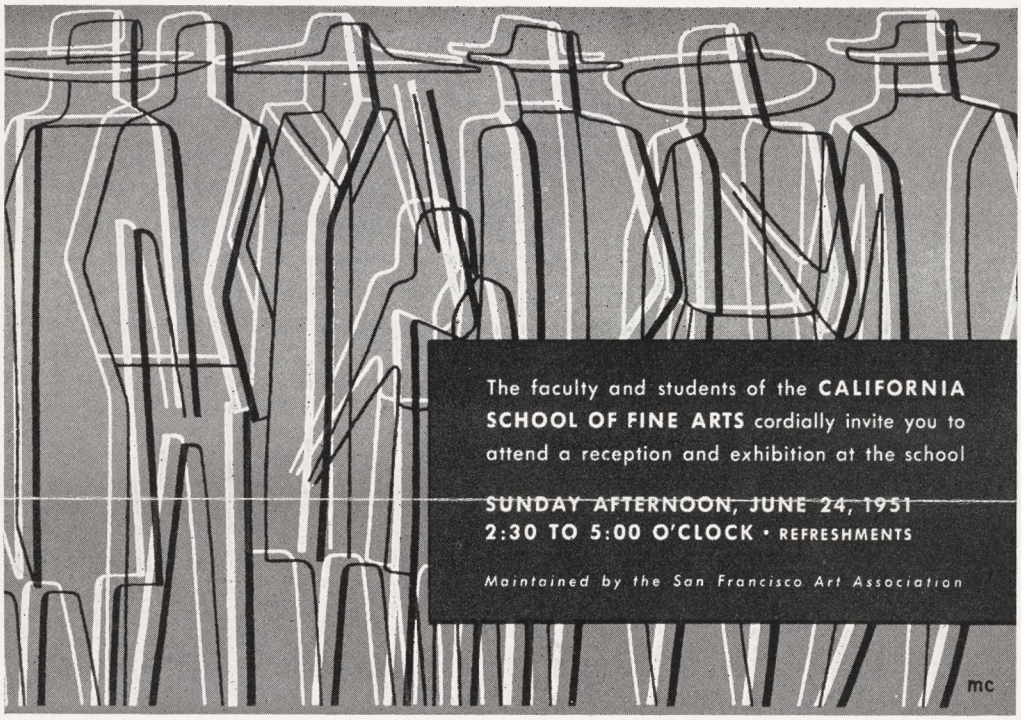
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SAN FRANCISCO ART ASSOCIATION BULLETIN

JUNE-JULY 1951 · VOL. 17 · NOS. 6-7



CSFA COMPLETES 78th YEAR

On Sunday, June 24, the CSFA academic year 1950-51 officially closes with the annual reception and student exhibition. Twenty-four Certificates of Completion are being awarded this year. The two top honors, The Fletcher Cup Award and the I. N. Walter Sculpture Prize, go to Charles Wong and Fenton Kastner respectively.

Herbert Abraham, Miriam Hoffman and Deborah Remington are being awarded Honor Scholarships for the coming year. Twenty-one Working Scholarships are also being given. This year two Junior College and three High School Scholarships go to Stephan Van Heune of Pasadena City College, Kenneth Skillicorn of Monterey Peninsula College, Rudolph Miranda of Richmond Union High, Jeanne Tvedt of Oakland Technical High, and David Nelson of Herbert Hoover High, Glendale. Katherine Wyllys of Tempe, Arizona, is the recipient of the National Scholastic Award Scholarship for the new year. The Latham Foundation Scholarship for the Summer Session goes to Jeanne Jenkinson of Hanford, California.

A cordial welcome is extended to members and their friends to participate in Sunday's activities. One week after the exhibition opening the CSFA will commence its Summer Session (July 2 - August 10), for which enrollments are now being accepted.

BENDER GRANTS-IN-AID WINNERS 1950-51

The Board of Trustees of the Albert M. Bender Memorial Fund have announced the following awards for the year 1950-51: to Ernest Briggs and Norman Woodbury, the Grants-in-Aid for Painting; to Lee Florian Gerlach and George Paul Elliott, the Grants for Literature; to Charles Wong, the first Grant in the field of Photography.

Briggs, a graduate of the CSFA, plans to explore the links between the "bedrock of spirit . . . and the fact of art." His studies will involve an analysis of the symbols and gestures which reveal the sources of artistic creativity. Norman Woodbury is also embarking upon a psychological project seeking to examine the meaning of his conviction that what is expressed in art cannot be stated in any other form, and that art in this sense acquires the status of necessity.

Poet Gerlach will continue a brilliantly begun career in literature by completing another volume of verses, adding to productions which have appeared in leading national literary journals and secured his reputation as one of the preeminent poets of the country. George Elliott proposes to complete his novel, *Tom Shackleford,* a work inspired by his intimate knowledge of the war-time labor scene.

In recognition of the fact that photography has become not only an important documentary vehicle, but also an artistic medium of the highest order, the Bender Trustees this year have added an award in Photography, the first recipient being Charles Wong. He has mapped out an exciting documentary study of the life of Chinese-Americans in San Francisco and plans to capture in his pictures the old generation with its national feelings and the evolvement of the younger into the pattern of American life.



Charles Wong: *Merry-Go-Round* (1950)

The Bender Grants are in the amount of $1200 and are open to persons under thirty-five years of age who have resided in the Bay Area for at least two years. Made without restriction as to race, color, creed or sex, the awards carry on the tradition of their founder, Albert M. Bender, in making it possible for young artists to develop their talents by carrying out projects of their own choice.

ANNUALS AND CRITICS (cont.)

In the April *Bulletin* we published abstracts of the varied comment appearing in the local press and on the air concerning the 70th Annual. The article concluded by noting the confusion concerning the functions of group shows such as the Annual. The *Chronicle's* art editor (April 29) took note of the Bulletin article and wrote a devastating critique of the whole system of large group shows in general and the Annuals in particular. Holding that this system is anachronistic and the source of great confusion to the public, Mr. Frankenstein suggested that the Art Association abandon its Annuals and concentrate its efforts towards holding individual shows of its members, or at least small group exhibits. He further suggested that the SFAA "consider very seriously the possibility of staging its big esthetic binges once every three or five years."

Being convinced that the criticism expressed in the pages of the *Chronicle* is directed against one of the basic activities of the SFAA, and without prejudging its merits, we suggest that our readers study the article *in toto* and send their replies or comments to the editor for publication in these columns. Elsewhere in this issue we have printed a brief review of the adverse action on the Art Festival and noted that the intervention of the artists is a requirement for a satisfactory solution of that problem. Certainly the issue of the Annuals demands equal consideration.

BULLETIN BOARD

Dates for the 15th Watercolor Annual have been set for November 15 through December 9.

Artist member Henry N. Rasmusen, author of the recent McGraw-Hill book, *Art Structure,* is gathering material for a book on monotype and similar indirect painting and print-making methods. He would like to hear from any artists in the area who have done work with such techniques. Address: 1544 Fulton Street, San Francisco; phone: WEst 1-6630.

The State Fair Art Show will be held from August 30 through September 9. All works must be received by the Exhibit Supervisor of Arts, California State Fair Grounds, Sacramento, by July 12. Entry blanks may be obtained by writing directly to the above address. Among SFAA members serving on the numerous juries for the show are Erle Loran, Richard O'Hanlon and Emmy Lou Packard.

The 1951 James D. Phelan Awards in Graphic Arts have been announced as follows: first prize in lithography, Myoko Ito of Chicago, second prize in this medium, Murray Justice of San Francisco (CSFA alumnus); first and second prizes in blockprint, John L. Horton of Chicago and Phyllis Bailey of Claremont; for etching and engraving, first prize to Jean Kellogg of Carmel, second prize, Leonard Edmondson of Pasadena (artist member), honorable mention, Ynez Johnston of Berkeley (artist member).

REPORTS FROM HOME AND ABROAD

Karl Kasten, artist member of the Board of Directors, has just returned from a month's tour as General Director of an all-university art exhibition comprised of student work from the four U. C. campuses: Berkeley, Davis, Santa Barbara and Los Angeles. All phases of the visual arts were represented—painting, sculpture, graphics, architecture, city and regional planning, landscape architecture, decorative arts, ceramics, commercial design, theatre design and photography. The exhibit remained at each university for four days and was attended by over 18,000 people.

Mr. and Mrs. John L. Howard (Blanche Phillips) have left for Mexico for an indefinite stay. Joining the trek south of the border are ***James*** and ***Lynn Weeks*** and ***Robert*** and ***Mary McChesney.***

Robert S. Neuman, artist member, has had one of his paintings accepted for the Denver Art Museum's 57th Annual.

The Rotunda Gallery is currently exhibiting drawings and sculpture by ***Archipenko.*** During July and early August the Gallery will hold its Annual Summer Print Show.

The CSFA Photography Department ends the school year with a number of "credits" in its column: a selection of the best fifty prints by students during the past five years will be exhibited at the Portland Art Museum June 18 to July 18. Currently on view at Vesuvios' is a showing of photographs taken during the current year.

The first of a series of six articles on photography aesthetics by instructor ***Minor White*** was published in the May issue of *American Photography*—its title: "Your Concepts Are Showing."

The editor has received a letter from ***Ray Bethers,*** artist member who has been residing in Europe during the past year. Datelined Paris, May 5, it reads: "Sitting here on the Boulevard Raspail, I can see dozens of little sales booths where French 'artists' attempt to sell their work. These street painters deal in sunsets, pink and blue fishing boats, and vine-covered cottages, just as the same kind of painters seem to do in all countries. Their pictures would fit in perfectly with the outdoor shows in New York's Washington Square. But then, the French people are very open-minded about pictures, and don't go in much for fads. They take Impressionist paintings (painted today) or pure abstractions, in their stride. What they apparently consider is not the latest fad, but whether the particular picture is perhaps a work of art, rather than is it the latest mode. As far as I am concerned, this is a healthy attitude.

"For the first time in several years I am now able to paint *all of the time.* It is indeed a wonderful experience. I have been invited to exhibit in the 'Salon de Mai,' which is modern in tendency. In April my new book, *How Paintings Happen,* was published in New York (Norton). In it are several paintings by SFAA members. *My From Eye to Camera* also came out in April (Pitman). It has photographs by several California photographers.

"We've been in Paris since December, and our winter was not distinguished by perfect weather. But now the trees are freshly green, and the sidewalk cafes are in full blossom. I saw Frederick Franck's exhibition over here, at the Galerie Drouant-David. It really caused quite a stir. From here it went to Amsterdam, London and Geneva, and Mr. Franck tells me it is also scheduled for the S. F. Museum of Art.

"Paris is filled with galleries, but they are scattered all over the city. New York's 57th Street is much more convenient for seeing pictures. The French have a quaint habit of *charging* for space for art criticisms in newspapers and magazines. But even though the space is paid for, it does not guarantee a good (or favorable) criticism. It only guarantees that some kind of mention will appear."

Mr. and ***Mrs. Robert B. Howard*** (Adaline Kent) are leaving for Europe for the summer months.

The Lucien Labaudt Gallery will be closed from June 15 to August 15. It will re-open with a Fifth Anniversary Exhibition of works by the late artist whose name the gallery bears.

Drawings and prints by artist member ***Phyllis Houser*** are on view at Sausalito's Contemporary Gallery through July 1.

The Oakland Art Gallery is now showing paintings by ***Hubert Buel*** and ***Barbara Astrella.***

THE POLITICS OF ART—OR THE ART OF POLITICS

The front page of the December 1950 issue of the *Bulletin* carried an account of the Art Festival which opened with the following sentence: "Under the steel-girt vault of the Palace of Fine Arts on the night of December 1, an epochal chapter of cultural history was heralded with the opening of the San Francisco Art Festival. Sponsored by the City of San Francisco, guided by the Art Commission and aided by the cooperation of artist groups of the nine Bay Area counties, the Festival brought together the most spectacular display of creative talents ever witnessed in this community."

This may have been an over-optimistic estimate of the occasion, a statement stimulated by the great volume of laudatory comment which reached us from all parts of the country at the time. In subsequent issues of the *Bulletin* we noted the hopes which were then being expressed for an expanded and improved 1951 Art Festival.

Six months later we must record with regret the fact that the Board of Supervisors has cut the appropriation from $10,000 to $5,000 and has stipulated that no municipal funds be spent for the purchase of works of art. This compromise was effected after the entire amount had been deleted from the city budget, owing to the protests of the Art Association, Artists Equity, the Art Commission, and many others. It is safe to say that the issue is far from resolved and that the basic nature of the controversy still remains clouded. Behind the fact that the Board of Supervisors approached the whole problem as though it were one primarily of economics—of what the City could afford in the light of civilian defense needs and mounting tax rates—there was the unstated essential question of aesthetic values, of artistic judgment, and the charter stipulations concerning the purpose and responsibilities of the Art Commission.

The Commission, as critic Alfred Frankenstein pointed out, is specifically entrusted with the difficult function of supervising municipal policy as it pertains to the arts. That this responsibility has now passed into other hands and entered directly into the arena of politics is the first conclusion to be drawn from the entire affair. To blame either the Commission or the Supervisors for this development would be an entirely negative response. Nor would it be reasonable to assert that the cultural life of the community has been dealt an irreparable blow. An improvement of the present status of the fine arts demands as a primary step the recognition of the fact that a crisis has existed, has become more evident in the domain of aesthetic values, and has manifested itself in political decisions. It seems certain that there can be no immediate or easy solution to this problem which demands a more determined and articulate intervention on the part of the artists most directly affected.

Despite financial difficulties, the Art Festival will be held this year—at the Palace of Fine Arts during the last week of September. Martin Snipper, who will again be its Director, plans to secure concrete support from local business institutions and interested individuals. Organized groups of artists are drawing up specific plans to obtain wide community endorsement and assistance to make the 1951 Festival both broader in representation of all arts and more productive in its return to the participants and the City.

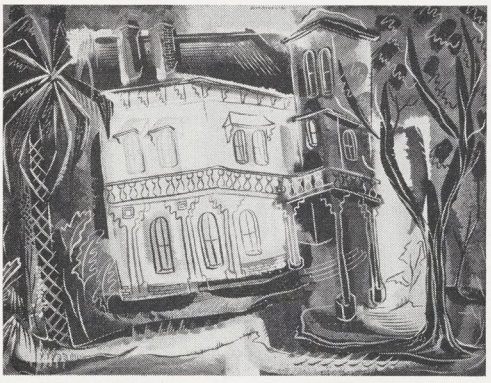


photo by Lois Willard

JOHN AYRES EXHIBITION

A showing of watercolors and gouaches by artist member John Ayres is being held at Raymond & Raymond through July 9. A former pupil of John Haley and Erle Loran of the University of California, Ayres is now Chairman of the Art Department of Chico State College. He has previously taught in the public schools of Modesto, Sacramento and Pacific Grove, and has been a visiting professor at U. C. Ayres' works have been exhibited in numerous one-man shows, and he has participted in group exhibits in many of the west coast museums. Reproduced here is the watercolor, *Old Bidwell #9*, one of twenty-five works in the current exhibition.

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CONSIDERATIONS OF CHANGE AND LOSS OF IDENTITY

In connection with thought of remedying some of the time-developed defects in the Constitution and By-Laws of the San Francisco Art Association, ideas have been advanced for changing the organic nature of the Association and giving it additional new functions and responsibilities. According to these ideas, the Association would embrace all "professional artists," give them a unity to "better serve and better handle" community art efforts, enable them to operate "more intensively and give leadership in this community," and give "a new vitality and power to the Art Association."

These ideas are of a practical nature, but their application would, I believe, radically alter the nature and significance of the SFAA. It seems to me that they would convert the Association into a socio-political organization, that is, into something like a Chamber of Commerce of Art. The functions of such an organization reside in the Artists' Groups of the Bay Area Associated, with which the SFAA has affiliation as a member. It would be wasteful and confusing to duplicate the functions. (See AGBAA RE-ORGANIZATION in the May *Bulletin*.)

The SFAA is a valuable heritage and asset of the West precisely because it represents in its being and activities the ideals of the painter and the sculptor. These ideals are followed in a disassociated seeking for beauty and truth and the expression of them through art, thus to the discovery of fresh values to human apprehension. The process results in increasing the knowledge of values. It is followed singly and alone and without commitments or entanglements. It has a counterpart in the field of pure science, where men likewise seek truth without regard for the effects of their discoveries upon the world. Others take and apply to practical purposes what men discover in each of these fields. In the one field this is done by artists of the decorative arts; in the other, by practical technicians.

The SFAA must, it seems to me, retain its high purpose and singleness of aim, or else a great value will be lost. It could adjust to accommodate the architect, and thus include within its scope the three fields of the visual fine arts. It is compatible with its aim and purpose to conduct a school wherein is taught painting and sculpture and the decorative and useful visual arts as well. They all are one in a proper art school picture.

—JOHN J. CUDDY

Ernest Born has invited comment from the artist members of the SFAA on his proposal to broaden the base for Art Association activity. The comments of experienced, informed artists published to date give perspective to his considerations. One is impressed by the quality of basic agreement, in spite of the impression of differences.

Every form of art constitutes an integrative social expression. One salient fact emerges, however, if seriously considered—and that is that there exists no collective basis for the arts in our time—ecclesiastical, lay, political, or whatever. To propose that this problem could be solved in a realistic way by merely banding together "artist groups" avoids the fundamental problem. Actually it is a social problem in a larger sense, reflecting, in the words of Emmy Lou Packard, "the confused and destructive environment we live in today."

The solution to the problem, as partially solved by the responsibility of the SFAA and those who support it, does not lie in the Market-Place. Rather it lies in maintaining the freedom of the artists it trains through supporting the CSFA which respects the validity of autonomous, self-disciplined spontaneity in all fields of art expression. This philosophy reflects a manifestation of our century which has no collective style, not because it is insensitive or lacks understanding, but because it is an integral part of it. No single organization is able authoritatively to encompass the simultaneous existence of autonomous art forms—a factor to be embraced in realistic contemporary thinking. "Art" is obviously not to be considered as only painting and sculpture, but each has a strong individual identity which must be respected. The lack of understanding which would compare the distinguishing quality of a photographer against that of the architect or other artist is obvious, and certainly not the point. The individual contributions of all, if genuinely understood, are community.

Art is not an adornment subject to the pursuit of economic favor. Unfortunately, our archaic social thinking, mechanized and dehumanized, cannot recognize that in the absence of a collectively supported social activity, the artist with a personal vision has a moral, and therefore a social, value.

A truly progressive contribution comes after the independent creation and not before—this contribution is now being made in the SFAA support of the CSFA. Its advances in exploring new frontiers has been nationally appreciated; its value lies not only in a local development but in a genuinely national creative leadership of social reality. These forms, difficult and generally impossible to accept on a large public scale, are an indication of leadership in thinking. To channel this contribution into the demands of a buying public is to abdicate in favor of an academy.

Space does not permit a full exchange of ideas, but one must consider paragraph seven of Mr. Born's memo which implies "a greater artist membership than painters and sculptors, in order to operate more intensively and give leadership to the community." Certainly within the framework of their own organization they have made a recognized and unique contribution to their field, not only in the community but in a national sense, as have our painters, sculptors, photographers, potters and other artists in all fields of creative activity.

It is a romantic deception to believe genuine meaning in the arts can have immediate value in commercial trading. Such a situation has seldom successfully existed. Secondary advantages and meaning are highly desirable, but this leadership is not to be interpreted as practical in that sense, rather—spiritual, in our era, one anxious with doubts and fears of the very survival of civilization. The Art Association, by supporting Artists Equity, the Art Festival, and working cooperatively with other independent artist groups, none of which would lose its particular and valuable identity, would best serve these purposes. The basis for cooperation in the arts must come from the support of the artist through an integrated social structure and not from the "organization" of a group of artists.

The artist must serve as a stimulus to others who reach larger groups of people, many of whom are capable of only these indirect effects. To lose the quality of ceaseless, unfettered exploration would be to lose the symbol of our time—the aim of democracy—freedom. The convenience of the historian may prove otherwise, but it is our only hope for survival.

—RAMSEY WIELAND

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